

OPERATION FANTAST

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EDITORIAL

Progress ?

We are rather afraid you will get a shock when you look at the new subscription rate overleaf. But you will appreciate that it is necessary, we hope, when you realise that to pay postage on the four O.F.'s and six to eight NEWSLETTERS you will receive in the year will bite about 1/6 (21c.) out of that sum.

At the same time, you will by now have received the HANDBOOK, and will realise that we are making progress towards putting the 'operation' part of our title into real effect. Although the various folk who are 'operators' of the various services will not receive any part of your subscription directly, certain charges against O.F. will arise that should be paid by them. In actual fact, the cost of such charges will be borne by the increased sub rate . . we hope.

In the main, all the services listed are already in working order—but their combination will give them more publicity, and will enable O.F. members to get speedy service from them. We hope to extend the range of services offered, but that is purely up to you. Tell us what you want, and we will work it over. Suggestions on this should be sent to Peter Hallifax, of the 'Contact Bureau,' and he will consolidate them.

Among other things, we are considering producing various types of 'fan-publication.' The first series will be a really worth-while 'Magazine Checklist,' takings mags in ten-year blocks, listing stories and authors alphabetically. Before we really start, we need to know how many folk want such lists, and which mags to include. Just as a test case, we have F.F.M. 1939—1950 ready. Our estimate of the price is 6d to O.F. members, 1/- to others. How many of you want it, and would pay for it? How many of you are willing to work on producing other similar lists?

Now, we may be completely in error, and perhaps no-one wants such lists. In that case, what other things would you like? Some stuff we will be able to produce to 'give away,' some you'll have to pay for. A lot of factors are involved, and we need your guidance on the subject. Please let us have it.

Fantastically Yours,

JOYCE & KEN SLATER.

BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

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Insolation . . .

By B. T. JEEVES

Herbert Richards turned from the eyepiece of the ten-inch refractor, reduced the density of the light filter and gazed at the rainbow of colour splashed across the screen. This time there could be no doubt of what he saw, reduced in intensity though it was, the Sun's spectrum showed a considerable change from its past appearance. Richards called to his assistant, who strolled over from the camera he had been loading. "What do you make of that?" he asked. Swift glanced at the band of colours, pondered a second and then came up with an answer. "Solar Spectrum with a ten or eleven filter, what's unusual about that, Herb?" Richards fingered his sandy moustache before answering, "You're dead right about the spectrum, but the filter is only a number three." Swift crossed to a window, opened a shutter and looked out. When he returned, there was a slightly vacant expression on his normally homely features. "There isn't a trace of cloud outside, it's a beautiful day and yet the sun seems a trifle yellow." His nominal superior sighed and said, "I noticed it about a month ago, but this is the first chance I've had to make a decent check. I don't know what's happening, but it seems as though something queer is happening to old Sol. Perhaps we'd better check with one of the larger observatories." Together they left the dome, descended the spidery iron ladder and crossed the floor to the office of Dr. Bergen, head of the observatory. Richards explained the position, and the bespectacled director reached for the video switch. A couple of quick calls followed, and the results, though confirmatory were distinctly unpleasant. Both observatories had recently noted the change, and with their superior equipment were prepared to state that the Sun was acquiring a new state of balance, one which demanded a lower energy output than before.

Dr. Bergen clicked off the video and gazed at Swift and Richards for a long moment, then, pushing his spectacles up on to his forehead, put into words the thought that none of them wanted to frame. "The Sun is cooling, and if it has to go far to reach equilibrium, then it looks like the end for all of us." Swift didn't wait for the words to die away but spoke impulsively. "It can't really be as bad as that, this old world has looked after us for a long time now, I can't see it giving up so easily." The others did not share his optimism, but having no alternative, decided to wait and see. In the meantime, as Bergen said, the best thing to do was to carry on as usual.

They didn't have to wait long, nor did the rest of the world's population. In a few weeks' time it was becoming increasingly obvious that something was wrong with the weather. Cold spells were increasing, both in frequency and severity. The skies became duller, and the Summer that should have been approaching seemed to be as far away as ever. It was about this time that the news leaked out from some fame-seeking star-

gazer and seized upon with open arms by a newspaper syndicate in urgent need of a circulation builder. Boosted and garbled though the facts were, the meaning was plain to all. The Sun was cooling. An enterprising editor ran an article on the coming Ice Age and speculated on the means of avoiding the same. Significantly enough, he spent a large slice of his bonus buying one of the latest radio powered heaters, rather than follow his own lead of firing a few V-2's fitted with atomic war-heads into the Sun in order to stir it up. The general reaction was very similar, even the old-fashioned electric heaters vanished from the market and the shareholders of the Radiant Radio Power Company rubbed their collective hands. The almost extinct coal industries revived in order to cash in on the boom, as there were many homes not equipped with high capacity receivers to stave off the cold.

In the face of all this clamouring for warmth, the Central World Government had to step in. Their own staff of scientists had made observations, and their conclusions were made public at a world-wide address made by the President of the ruling committee. His speech, delivered in Esperanto, began with a summary of the situation. Then came his first bombshell. The temperature of the Sun would not drop very far, but the effect on the Earth would be to reduce the climate outside the Tropics to one closely resembling that of the Arctic Circle. Inside the tropics, the prospect would be slightly better, rather similar to a Canadian winter. Before this news had been digested, the President went on to say that the Central Government had examined every feasible way of escape, and that a plan of campaign had been mapped out. He warned his listeners that the plan would entail hard slaving work for everyone, but if the work was done, then the human race could live on. The President paused, cleared his throat and then plunged into an explanation of the plan.

Six months later, in spite of the increasing cold and heavy snowfalls, the work was well under way. All over the tropical and sub-tropical land masses of the Earth reared the aerial towers of the Radio Power Company. Energy speared through the ether from the pile powered transmitters, on conversion it fed groups of buildings and machinery. Deep inside the Earth, men slaved with Radio powered drills and excavators, burrowing deeper and deeper beneath the crust of the planet. Behind them followed the construction corps. Cavern after cavern lost its gloom before the glare of arc lamps and cutting torches. Gradually the forbidding caverns, hewed from the bowels of the Earth were being filled with buildings, huge blocks of apartments, heating systems, hospitals and more and more power stations.

The Great Plan was well under way, the human race was leaving the surface it had known for so long and moving into the interior where it hoped to conserve its heat and survive after the surface became too cold for normal life. Every able bodied man had been conscripted into the fight, Radiant Power had been shifted to another frequency band to permit its exclusive use by the workers and scientists of the project. The latter, in their carefully guarded and protected surface laboratories slaved night and day to improve old and develop new equipment of the diggers and construction men. Every slight improvement was worth applying, for great as was the effort that was being expended, it still fell far short of the required level. It was a cheerless but unescapable fact that sufficient shelters to house the race could never be completed in the time remaining.

Up on the surface, a few miles from No. 3 Bore, was a small lab, manned by half a dozen or so electronic specialists. Each and every one of them spent all his waking hours on some device to aid the plan. Cliff Beech, in the Radiant lab, thought of the diggers and turned again to the contraption on the bench. Carefully he hooked in an eight mike smoothing condenser and checked the decoupling of a tiny oscillator with the oscilloscope. Then, very delicately, he aligned the second oscillator to within 50 kc/s of the first. Brushing back his unruly black hair, he reached in the pocket of his lab smock and drew out a crumpled pack

of cigarettes. He lit one, drew the smoke into his lungs and bent again to his task. An hour later it was finished. On the bench before him lay something that had once been a radio flashlight. A metal cylinder about eight inches long and two in diameter. At one end it blossomed out into a metal reflector with a three inch radius, while at the focal point, rested a tiny micro-wave antenna. Cliff lit another cigarette and straightened his weary back, pushing over his stool in the process. The noise of its fall drew the attention of his friend and co-worker, who looked up and said with a grin, "What's up, Cliff; giving up the Buck Rogers idea?" Beech grimaced back, "My dear podgy friend, I'm just about to show you and a few others around here, that disintegrators can be made, and that I have made one. Furthermore, when it starts removing large chunks of rock at one go, maybe we'll be able to catch up on the digging and make the plan really practicable. Care to come and watch me test it?" John Briggs needed no second invitation, he knew about Cliff's theory of vibratory disintegration and the use it would be to the excavators, but he was convinced that it wouldn't work. In spite of this, or more probably of it, he was quite prepared to follow his lanky friend and enjoy a laugh at his expense. As they left the lab he gazed at the object in Cliff's hand. "How come it's as small as that, Cliff?" he asked. "One very good reason my boy," explained the lanky one. "If you ever went to school, you'd know that micro-wave equipment must be small if it's going to operate on anything like a high frequency. I made it this way, so that it can form part of a standard radiant hand torch."

Nothing more was said until the pair stood outside the lab, facing the testing ground and a bitterly cold wind. Cliff raised his torch, looked round for a target, and decided on the top of a dead tree overhanging the path. "I'd better shoot upwards, as I don't know how far this thing will reach . . . here goes, Buck Rogers!" With this original remark he flicked over the switch, while Briggs pursed his lips in readiness for a resounding Bronx cheer. It was never given, a brilliant red glow shot from the reflector, the torch was wrenched from Cliff's hand and they both gazed open mouthed as it shot in a rising trajectory in the wake of the red beam. Within a few seconds, all that remained to show them that they were not dreaming was a roughly circular hole through the centre of a low lying cloud.

Briggs was the first to break the silence, "As a ray-gun, you've made a first-class rocket bomb. What on earth made it take off like that?" Cliff scratched his dark thatch and thought for a minute, then, suddenly the explanation hit him like a flash. "The damned thing did work, John: but it worked too well. The obvious thing happened, in fact it was so obvious that no one has ever considered it before. The beam destroyed everything in its path, just as I meant it to do. It also removed all traces of air in the beam, and left a perfect vacuum. With a vacuum before the reflector and normal air pressure behind, it just had to go. The reflector had a radius of three inches, that would give a pressure area of . . . er . . . $2/\pi/r$ squared, as the thing is almost a hemisphere, that's roughly sixty square inches, and at 4.7 pounds per square inch, it had a pull of about 840 pounds. It pretty nearly took my shoulder with it, well I guess that is decidedly that." "No it isn't," Briggs sounded grim. "That torch will only go so high and then it's own weight will balance the pressure. When that happens, it's going to hang around up there chewing steadily away at the atmosphere, dropping gradually, as the loss of air reduces the pressure . . . We've got to have Radiant Power turned off long enough to allow that thing to fall back to earth and smash itself to bits."

The startled pair turned and dashed back into the lab . . . Cliff slammed down the video switch and the breathless pair fumed impatiently until the screen blossomed into brilliance. The surprised operator put the call through to the local R.P. office, and faded from the screen to be replaced by a forbidding female. She glared at them from behind spectacles, noted their impatience and gave an audible sniff as she announced "Radiant Power Company Limited, whom do you wish to see?"

Cliff snapped, "Put me through to the chief engineer and make it snappy!" Taken aback so completely that she even forgot to sniff, the operator reached out of sight of the screen, and her image was replaced by the undulating sine curve of the 'Hold the screen' signal. Briggs drew a deep breath, fumbled in his pocket and unearthed two rather sorry specimens of the cigarette maker's art. Puffing them alight, he handed one to Cliff. Both men puffed like a couple of kids sneaking their first smoke, as they watched the thin, blue line on the screen. Suddenly it flickered and vanished, to be replaced by the lean features of R.P.'s chief engineer. He eyed the pair, raised one eyebrow and looked at them quizzically. Cliff wasted no time on preliminaries, but burst out, "You've got to turn off all the transmitters for this area immediately, it's a matter of life and death. . . ." He ran on to give a brief account of what had taken place immediately prior to their call. When he stopped for want of breath, the engineer spoke. "Even assuming that what you say is true, what do you expect me to do about it. In this emergency, all our transmitters are under Council control, and can only be turned off by their orders. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with the Excavation plan. I'm sorry, but you'll have to take it up with the Council." Cliff tried again, and Briggs added his own little piece, but the engineer was adamant, and in the end, Cliff broke the connection with a force that almost tore the switch from its socket. Once again it was Briggs who broke the silence, "What do we do now?" he asked. Cliff looked at him, then back at the video. "Call the council, I guess, but they'll prove a hard nut to crack." His prophecy proved correct. After being shunted from secretary to secretary and re-telling his story each time, Cliff was fed up to the back-teeth with secretaries, sine curves and shelving of responsibilities. At last he was connected with a minor official. After beating about the bush for many minutes, the man told Cliff that he would put the matter forward at the next Council meeting, and that if Cliff's story was true, he should get back to work and turn out more disintegrators for use on the project. With this parting remark he broke the circuit and left them gazing at a blank screen.

With a muttered curse, Cliff swung from the video and went to his bench. At his friend's query he merely grunted, "That pin-head wants more disintegrators, he's going to get at least one, maybe then we can convince the Council what they're up against." With that he reached for his soldering iron and set to work. Even though the process was now familiar, the work was not easy, and in spite of the help of John Briggs, and the other technicians sent in when the supervisor heard his story; it was three days later before Cliff pushed in the minivalves, attached the Radiant unit and lined up the last circuit on the 'scope. The second model was almost exactly like the first, save for one important difference. It was attached to a stout metal framework, complete with heavy anchoring lugs, one of which was fastened to the Radiant unit, so that in the unlikely event of the mounting breaking loose, the power supply would be wrenched from its socket. The idea was to prevent a repeat performance of the first incident. On test, it was just as efficient as its predecessor, and succeeded in startling the supervisor out of his habitual calm. At last, armed with introductions and letters from the officials on the project, Cliff and his companion managed to obtain a hearing before the council. Even so, it was a full month before they found themselves standing before the semi-circular council table, confronting the twelve members appointed to hear their case. For the hundredth time, Cliff told his story, knowing as he did so, that these men must have heard it already, but now they were hearing it in the approved official manner. Before he commenced to speak, Cliff had discarded his heavy coat, for it was an unusually mild day. Now he noticed with some surprise that none of the men before him appeared to be wearing any extra clothing to keep out the usual evening chill. When he had finished, the twelve men conferred in low whispers. At last their leader turned to Cliff and John. "Mr. Beech and Mr. Briggs, we have studied your case very carefully, and we are agreed that your anxiety has been quite

justified according to the data you have had to work on." Here, I paused as if to savor his facts to the full, before imparting them. "However, we may now tell you that there is no cause for alarm. First of all, Radiant Power engineers have assured us that the standard hand unit as used by you, has a continuous duty life of only three months. By that time the cathode has been almost completely stripped, and satisfactory emission is out of the question. I think that even you will agree, that your disintegrator could not render this globe completely airless in that short time. In a few more weeks the danger will be completely over. Secondly, as to your requests that disintegrators be put into operation as quickly as possible, for use in the excavations. We may tell you in confidence, that such a step may not be needed." He raised his hand to ward off Cliff's expected outburst, and continued: "According to reliable reports, although the sun has not increased its rate of radiation, the overall weather and temperature conditions are gradually creeping back to normal. Why, we do not know, but if this gradual increase persists, within a month it may be possible to cancel Operation Underground."

Neither Cliff nor John remembered much of the remainder of the interview, and it was not until they were back in their hotel room that either could give the matter much thought. "Wha an idiot I've been," grunted Cliff, "Why didn't I check up on the Radiant Units at first?" John Briggs slumped into an easy chair and replied, "Blow the power units. What I'd like to know, is what is causing the increase in temperature . . ." He broke off, his mouth wide open, and stared at Cliff. At last he spluttered, "I've often read stories about how the hero saves the world, but I never expected it to happen in real life—least of all by accident." "What are you babbling about?" asked Cliff. "Cliff Beech, world saver," laughed Briggs. Although it was an accident, you've saved us all with your disintegrator . . . Have you ever heard of insolation?" Cliff looked at his friend askance. "Of course I have, what do you think prevents short circuits in my sets." Briggs was really pleased now, "Not insolation, you mug; I said 'insolation,' there's a great deal of difference. The latter is used to describe how the sun warms the earth through the atmosphere blanket. Actually, we're nearer to the sun in Winter, but its rays strike the earth at a smaller angle, thus having to pass through a large lump of atmosphere before striking the earth, and then they spread over a large area. As a result, we get less heat. In Summer however, we're further from the sun, but the angle is greater, there's less air in the way, and the heat is more concentrated. The result is a higher temperature . . . Your disintegrator is thinning down our air blanket, and in doing so is giving the sun's rays a better chance of reaching the earth. In consequence, the temperature is rising again. Just wait and see, in a month's time, Operation Underground will be as useless as an icicle in a blast furnace." Briggs finished with a triumphant smile. Cliff exhaled a deep breath and gasped, "Well I'll be a . . ." He stopped, as a thought struck him, "I wasn't far wrong about insolation after all, instead of burning it out, I've just stripped the insolation a bit."

Four weeks later, amidst great pomp and ceremony, the President announced the end of the great operation, and completed his address by throwing a switch which operated relays putting Radiant Power back on the public band. Down near the equator, far from the steamship lanes, a tiny Radiant hand-torch ceased emitting its red glow. A deep rumble above it evidenced Nature's dislike of vacuums, and the tiny object began its long fall. Minutes later there came a splash on the surface of the sea, a plume of spray shot into the air and fell back in a fine haze. The few ripples were soon lost in the swell of the ocean, while overhead, the sun shone from a cloudless sky.

THE END

Space War

By H. J. Campbell

It's an indictment, in a way, of our civilisation that the majority of STF yarns deal with wars or militant conflicts of some undeclared kind. We project our experiences of the past into the future and assume that space travel will, inevitably, bring space wars.

And we are probably right.

A consideration of these things at the far-back of my mind (coupled with a congenital disposition to haste), may make this article a little rambling and not quite what KFS thought it would be. Will you bear with me?

Trying to predict the kind of wars that will occur when a trip to the Moon is as easy as a morning hop from London to Rome is now. I start to wonder what wars are. This isn't easy. There's the political schism; there's the industrial frustration; there's the ruthless beligerancy of people who **must** be ever shooting and killing, razing and destroying. A lot of our STF 'heroes' come into this latter category. Face it. It's true.

And it's the latter type of warmonger that finds most favour in STF. Oh, yes, he's usually delineated as the tall, sparse Commander in the Space Force who's going to smash the hordes from The Void. Usually, too, he finds that the void is not quite so void as he thought. It's full of superships with superweapons and superultramondanities. But, after all, **he's** a superMAN.

So he has a row with the Admirals (never Air Marshals), and browbeats them into letting him have a fleet of the latest (always the latest), space cruisers. He gathers the picked crews, says good-bye to his girl and zooms away to save the world or the upper western part of it. We feel a little disappointed if the girl doesn't turn out to be hiding in a bunk somewhere.

Very soon the vivid void is filled with other things than rarified gasses. There're rays whose dramatic initials are working their way through the Greek alphabet. Energy is made to undergo the most amazing transformations, appearing effectively enough, as bolts. Just bolts.

Withal, there is a seething, searing, screaming, scintillating clash of ships and weapons. Very often there is coruscating light, too.

Don't shout at me. I know you don't find that sort of thing in the best STF. Not so crude. Not so coruscating. But still a massed fleet sweeping down and doing a goodly bit of annihilation. Anyway, I'm not criticising the best STF. Who could?

I'm criticising the worse and worst forms, because it's only by criticism (individual and collective), that their elevation will be effected. Why leave it all to me? Write in yourself to the editors and authors. Tell them you're fed up with the Greek alphabet. That is if you **are** fed up with it.

Because, you know, it sells well, this holocaustic way of making the Universe realise that only Man is right. Primitive instincts, I guess. I'm not sure that the instinct for self-preservation hasn't been misinterpreted. Seems more likely to me, the way things have shaped since things began, that we have an innate proclivity to **stop** the self-preservation of others. Only lately have we begun to realise that this procedure has a tendency to bounce back.

But maybe I'm just trying to be clever.

Even so, I'm right when I say it sells well. They simply lap it up like noodles stealing the milk from a bulldog's bowl. Makes them feel that if only they'd been born a century or two later. . . .

The reason, of course, is that the majority of readers don't stop to think. (My own view is that the majority don't stop to think, whether they are readers or not, but I won't say so in case you think I'm

antisocial). They don't reason out that you can't win wars like that. In space. No more than you can win wars in the air now. (The Battle of Britain only held it up a bit—all honour to the participants nevertheless).

If you are going to use military tactics and your enemy is going to respond in the time-dishonoured manner, you've got to land. In the air or in space you might shoot down a few hundreds, thousands, millions (depending on your taste for melodrama) of ships. But you still haven't won the war or conquered the planet. For that, you have to land and subdue the population—which is always much larger than the total combative forces; the Germans tumbled to this when they occupied France and the Netherlands.

A certain eastern Power has learnt the lesson, too, and is tackling the problem by infiltrating, none too secretly, a fifth column in practically every other country in the world. Maybe the next lesson is one that **we** shall learn—the hard way.

Whoever rules Earth in the future will almost certainly have gained its sovereignty by similar methods. And it will use precisely those methods of extending the rule to other planets—assuming, of course, that other planets are inhabited. There will probably be a huge military machine for dealing with recalcitrant types who won't or can't listen to reason. The rest, the majority, will be brought round to the 'right' way of thinking by fifth column persuasion.

This may take the form of physical domination—giving plenty of scope for 'knock-her-down-and-pelt-her' rays—but it will more likely be psychological. It's a proved fact that where the majority is concerned you can make them think anything by talking loud enough and long enough. Advertising for instance. As I said before, the minority can always be—what's the word they like? . . . Disintegrated, yes—the minority can be disintegrated without serious repercussions on the stability of the planet's affairs.

What's all that about, anyway? It comes to this. Our tall, sparse Commander in the Space Force won't be causing the wars or winning them. Instead, the political and industrial aspects (hypothesising for the moment that these are **not** identical), will decide that things would be looking up if a branch factory could be set up on Oink, or that the people of Quink have got the wrong ideas about the way to live. That much-neglected invention, the wheel, will start to turn—much as it does today, of course—and there'll be a little bit of not-unprecedented friendly effusions. Earthmen will find that Oink or Quink are delightful places to live in. 'Delightful, but not quite perfect. You see, on Earth we have . . .'

It doesn't take long. It's all over before three-quarters of the majority realise what's happening. Like Tibet.

In order to save a little time or a bit of form-filling, the magnates might call on our tall, sparse Commander to take his Space Force and try out his latest lethal toy on a section of the community that hasn't got the idea. A poor sort of fish, this Commander. A last resort—like the hammer we fetch out when the screwdriver won't do what it ought. Not so much a back-room boy as a back-seat boy.

You can imagine him, fondling the latest cruiser with loving care, caressing the energy tubes like they were his girl's arms, putting the spirit of the fight into his men on the training ground, close by the blast-off ramps.

And all the time mild-mannered men are winning the war in the Oink and Quink equivalents of the public bar. It's true enough that old soldiers fade away. Space cruisers, too, I reckon.

THE END

The Darkening Cloud

By Edward Wood

The crisis among the pulp magazines has finally halted the tremendous expansion of the fantasy and science fiction magazines, which for the last few years has resisted the general downward trend in circulation. Magazines are folding, contracting in size and/or number of pages, changing editors, policies and prices in bewildering rapidity the like of which has not been seen since the early 40's. Where it will end is difficult to say. Only the future will show us how far the present contraction in the field will go.

In a surprising move, Sam Merwin, Jr., has resigned from his job as editor of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, **STARTLING STORIES**, **FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE**, **WONDER STORY ANNUAL**, in order to devote himself full time to free lance writing. The number of pages in the magazines have been reduced. A new cover policy, plus an appeal for slick-like writing (nothing was said about increased word rates for this), indicates the concern that Standard Publications have for their offspring.

Popular Publications have taken extensive steps to boost lagging circulations. Along with the bulk of their pulp magazines, **FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES** was put into a new neat format, smaller size, less pages, no advertising, smooth edges. The no interior illustrations policy was changed after two issues but they are much fewer in number compared to earlier issues. **A. MERRITT FANTASY MAGAZINE** which folded after fives, has now been joined by **FANTASTIC NOVELS MAGAZINE**, the June, '51 issue (with a new cover design) apparently being last. Considering that it was a reprint magazine and thus ensured a higher margin of profit per issue, circulation must have dropped sharply. **SUPER SCIENCE STORIES** still continues, although it now has a changed cover design and is down to 112 pages.

Street and Smith, canny people that they are, folded their entire pulp string except **ASTOUNDING**, in 1949. Already in several states, a 35c. price appears on the cover, preliminary to a national increase. The absurd ten dollar subscription price for foreign subscribers has been cut down to four dollars. Editor Campbell, Dianetics or not, has been forced by the competition of the fabulous **GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION** to increase his already excellent word rates. In other matters not pertinent to this article, Street & Smith have shown a tendency to milk their little darling of all the money they can. Not all is well at the house of Campbell.

The Ziff-Davis pulps have been moved to New York. William Hamling who really edited **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES** stayed behind to take over **IMAGINATION**. Both **AMAZING** and **FANTASTIC** are very skinny compared to the fat war time issues. The much awaited slick **AMAZING** alas, belongs to the realm of what might have been. Whether editor Browne's idea of making **AMAZING** a semi-science fiction, semi-detective magazine would have been successful is now merely a matter for debate.

The daring newcomer to the field, **GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION**, has with its May, '51 issue increased its price to 35c. Its unprecedented success has caused many competitors grey hairs. At the present time, it is, without doubt, the unquestioned leader in the field. Yet there are shadows in this picture. The cut-off of Street & Smith material to the companion **GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS** means that editor Horace L. Gold will have an increasingly difficult time finding suitable long stories.

Goodman Magazines revived **MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES** as a regular pulp and then after two issues contracted it (along with others) to digest size. The improvement in format was negated in part by poor make-up. **DYNAMIC SCIENCE STORIES**, according to most recent reports, will not be revived. Robert Erisman, the editor, intends to make

MARVEL a leader in the field and is offering high rates for first class material.

Robert Lowndes, former fan, edits FUTURE COMBINED WITH SCIENCE FICTION STORIES and SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY, two titles which seemingly never die. FUTURE starting out with a 15c. price tag, quickly raised it to 20c. With his word rates, it is difficult to see first rate material being submitted to Lowndes. If he intends to compete with the leaders, he will have to alter his format and make-up radically.

The name of Donald A. Wollheim conjures up nice things like POCKET BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION, PORTABLE NOVELS OF SCIENCE and not nice things like OUT OF THIS WORLD ADVENTURES which lasted but two issues. Wollheim used to hound Hugo Gernsback for the deficiencies of the old WONDER STORIES. Let us be more charitable and allow the demise of OUT OF THIS WORLD ADVENTURES a respectful and grateful silence. AVON FANTASY READER has now been joined by AVON SCIENCE FICTION READER, which except for the title is an exact duplicate of the first. Wollheim still has 10 STORY FANTASY in the regular pulp field. While much better than his previous effort, it has few superior characteristics and suffers (as do others), from irregular publication.

PLANET STORIES is one of the few magazines to have increased output. After ten years as a quarterly, it became a bi-monthly and also brought forth a quarterly companion TWO COMPLETE SCIENCE-ADVENTURE BOOKS which has recently been cut back to three issues a year. This could be due to a scarcity of material. Jerome Bixby, formerly the editor of PLANET has been replaced by Malcolm Reiss with Bixby assisting on a part-time basis.

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, the little magazine with the long name, an above average (for how long?) price of 35c., no readers column and no interior illos, still continues hale and hearty despite numerous rumors to the contrary. In fact by using more lines to the page and changing from a quarterly to a bi-monthly, it has increased its output. Apparently someone intensely jealous of Boucher and McComas started the baseless rumor that the magazine had folded. While rumor mongering, at times is considered to be a playful sport, to a magazine, it can be very serious, scaring off potential advertisers, contributors and subscribers.

After two 1950 issues, nothing more has been heard of FANTASY STORIES. It is not missed.

WEIRD TALES is again using reprints from its younger days.

FANTASY BOOK, the irregular publication from California, still appears from time to time. Lacking national distribution, it cannot be listed among the major magazines.

WORLDS BEYOND folded after three issues (Dec., '50; Jan., '51; Feb., '51). It certainly did not get an opportunity to show its merits. Nor did editor Damon Knight. Starting a new magazine at the present time requires money, courage and a bit of patience. STAR SCIENCE FICTION from Gnome Press has been laid to rest still-born. Also nothing more has been heard about a magazine from California, under the editorship of Ken Crossen; nor another magazine under the expert hands of H. L. Gold.

Ray Palmer, with OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES had been expected to challenge the leaders. In some issues he has had excellent stories but . . . Since his accident, the actual editor has been Beatrice Mahaffey, who has ably continued the neat, friendly magazine. William L. Hamling is now guiding IMAGINATION and can be expected to show the shrewdness and ability which Ziff-Davies could have capitalized upon.

No matter what the cause of the many changes of the last year, whether it be television, Korea, pocket-type books, etc., all that can be said is that more extensive changes are probable. Perhaps they are closer than we think.

THE END

Book News and Reviews

by E. J. CARNELL

The pocket-book flood in Britain recedes, but it looks probable that this will be replaced by a lesser, although more important, flood of hard-covered stuff from the better publishers. Information is vague, but I gave you some definite news last issue of O.F., and I can now add to that the news that MACDONALDS, distributing for Grayson & Grayson, have included in their Spring-Summer, '51 catalogue three science fiction titles. These are: THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, edited by E. F. Bleiler and T. E. Dikty; MEN AGAINST THE STARS, edited by Martin Greenberg; and vV's THE VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE. All will be Crown 8vo, 256pp, and 8/6 each. Whether the two anthologies will be reprinted in full I cannot say—it would appear doubtful, in view of the smaller number of pages, whether Best S-F Stories will be, but even so at 8/6 against 2.95, these books will be a bargain for British readers. Macdonald's, by the way, have added THE PEOPLE OF THE MIST to their growing list of Haggard reprints. At 8/6, illo-ed by Jack Matthews, this long unobtainable Haggard should be welcome news to many of you.

Other good news comes from U.S.A. In the last two years ARKHAM HOUSE have been conspicuous—they have not been publishing. As the pioneer house in the field, this has been something of a shock to their followers. But for 1951, Derleth promises two collections, one by vV, AWAY AND BEYOND, a selection of nineteen of his shorter tales, at \$4.00; and twenty-six tales from David H. Keller, under the title TALES FROM UNDERWOOD. These will be predominately s-f, with some of his best short fantasies. Price \$3.50, and both titles will be out in Autumn.

SHASTA, who have also been idle of late, hope to make up for lost time with big spring and summer schedules. These include a collection of Frederick Brown's shorts, SPACE ON MY HANDS; a new novel by Rena Vale, BEYOND THESE WALLS; the second in the Heinlein History, THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH, and THE GREAT BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION, an anthology edited by Erle Korschak.

EVERY BOY'S BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION, edited by Donald Wollheim, has now been released by Frederick Fell, Inc., \$2.75, and includes such items as Hamilton's CONQUEST OF TWO WORLDS, and Williamson's IN THE SCARLET STAR.

A new book from the pen of Wilson Tucker, who has used science-fiction fandom as a background in mystery novels, will be his first s-f novel. Titled THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA, it is due probably in late fall.

Sam Moskowitz, reporting in March, '51 S-F NEWSLETTER, lists 57 titles published by the main houses in 1950. It looks like this total will be exceeded well before the end of 1951. . . . Better look to your pockets, friends, and start making careful selections. It will be an expensive year!

REVIEWS

I. ROBOT: Isaac Asimov. (GNOME PRESS, \$2.50).

DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE: A. Merritt. (Grandon Co., \$3.50)

Reviewed by H. J. Campbell.

Of the two, I prefer I, ROBOT, to DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE. But then, I'm mad about Asimov. Besides, I, ROBOT gives me something to think about—something that the Merritt doesn't do. Oh, of course, it's famous. The U.S.A. ARGOSY brought it out first, way back in 1932. Liveright put board covers on it in 1932 in U.S.A. and Skeffington did the same in London in 1933. Then FANTASTIC NOVELS ran it in April, 1941, and again in September, 1949. The AVON MURDER

MONTHLY series was graced with it as a pocket book. And now the Grandon Company have sewn it between cardboard again, for \$3.50.

If only I could write a book that sold like that I'd probably say it was the best thing on the market. As it is, mine just peter out and nobody ever hears of them, so I'm a bit grumpy about all this. I'm just waiting for the film. But, of course, if you're sensible (and show me an SFan who isn't) you'll not take any notice of me. Instead, you'll realise that hard-headed publishers don't do that kind of thing to a book because they like its title. They know that A. Merritt's eighth long tale is full of suspense, wizardry, entertainment, murder, erudition and some of the finest writing you're ever likely to come across.

But I still like I, ROBOT better. Shoot me if you will, but there, I say, is a book that I'd give a good portion of my anatomy to have written—not because it sells well, because it's everything a science fiction book should be, page by page, word by word, and—yes—letter by letter. If you haven't read these tales, you're a philistine; if you don't read them after this, then there's no hope for you at all and you'd better get used to wielding a shovel.

There are nine stories in the book: eight of them come from ASF (does one have to say more than that, even?), and the other from SSS. Asimov has woven a connecting thread for the whole lot, and here, at last, we have the missing link. These stories must be read together, in order. Start with 'ROBBIE' that ponderous nursemaid, and walk with 75-year-old Susan Calvin through the whole history of robots and robotics. There's a lot to see on the way. There's RUNAROUND, REASON, CATCH THAT RABBIT, LIAR!, LITTLE LOST ROBOT, ESCAPE!, EVIDENCE, and, last of all, that beautiful piece of creative imagination, THE EVITABLE CONFLICT.

Read them. And if, when you've done so, you don't feel that Susan Calvin is right when she says that 'you just can't differentiate between a robot and the very best of humans,' then you haven't a shred of perception in you. Asimov writes about these machines with such deep understanding that I have my suspicions. I'd like to see an X-ray of our Isaac's interiors.

H. J. C.

—By the way, I quite forgot, I, ROBOT is published by GNOME, at \$2.50. For heaven's sake get one quickly!

POCKET BOOKS by K.F.S.

I am happy that the flood of British pocket-books is slackening. I am also happy that SCIENCE FICTION FORTNIGHTLY will continue, even though it will be monthly. Admittedly, some of their publications are below standard—my standard, anyway—but they are improving. Take No. 7, Roy Sheldon's ENERGY ALIVE. I have two main faults to pick with that, the first a minor one. I don't like a space-captain-hero to be named 'Shiny Spear'—sounds more suitable for a cave-man yarn. My second complaint is a little more serious. If the ship was built to exceed the speed of light, why should the crew be surprised if under constant power it achieves a velocity of four times light-speed? If one accepts the fact it can exceed light speed, and it is under constant power—hence acceleration—unless some other limiting factor is introduced there is no reason why it should not reach 40, or 400 times light speed. Needless to say, that quibble tells you it is an inter-planetary yarn. When I say that our hero journeys to the Hub of the Universe, you'll realise it is even greater in scope. And although I don't see that the Hub should be the oldest part of the universe, in view of what is happening there, it was the right place to go. Just what was happening, you'll have to read the yarn to discover, but you can take it from me that it is readable, if you accept a less racy style than the U.S.A. space-opera.

Now, No. 8, in which editor H. J. Campbell makes his debut, is something different again. In WORLD IN A TEST TUBE you never leave the earth's surface, except for an airplane ride. If I had phrased that better I would have put 'you' in capitals, for YOU are the chap in the story.

Mr. Campbell has used a neat system to place you into the role of hero in this tale, and that makes it very readable. Briefly the plot concerns the activities of a superman-scientist, who, having attained the enviable position of Caesar's wife—above suspicion—proceeds to use humanity as his laboratory animals, and the world as his testing ground. Hence the title. You, the hero, learn the true situation by chance... but what can you do about it? Don't forget, this man is mankind's benefactor, and not openly accusable! Needless to say, it all works out well in the end. The characterisation in the story is good, but some of the 'background' scenery is a little illogical. Please, why if robots (positronic), have relieved man of much of his labour, should humans be doing all the jobs—pilots, receptionists, odd clerks, and so on? And although the next discrepancy may partially clarify the first, it only raises a new one; although it appears that many people are willing to work rather than stay idle and bored, a slightly later scene shows them in revolt because they have been called upon to work to save their lives! But another good yarn from SFF, and I'm looking forward to more and better ones.

On the other hand, let us glance at one of the reasons for my first statement that I was happy. CAPTIVE ON THE FLYING SAUCERS, by Ralph L. Finn. Science fiction, gentlemen... ladies please step out for a moment... page 68:—"... suddenly leaped high in the air, arching her back and throwing wide her arms, pushing her belly towards him, convexly."

That is the first major attempt made to seduce the hero of this—er—science fiction story, a series that continues throughout the novel, culminating, after 'the Fertile Man's Delight,' in which six women test the hero's 'masculinity,' in his final seduction by the Queen of Venus. Yes, Venus. That is where the s-f comes in, in this hodge-podge of sadism and sex. Venus is a bit short of 'fertile' men, and using the space ship in which they normally take refuge from the sun's heat in summer (s-f, see page 40); in a ship that, by the way, has a huge shed-like arrangement to keep out the bad weather in space (s-f, see page 53), they catch an earthman, to use him for various purposes. After hanging around for a period in the middle of the 'blue' sky (see page 82), halfway between earth and Venus, they start to move back to Venus through the clouds (see page 86). In the interim, the hero gets mixed up in a bull-fight, highlight of which is the piercing of the bull's 'vital' parts by a female bull-fighter, and various other highly scientific adventures. I mentioned the adjective 'sadistic' above, and I must support my contention. Page 108—"Sharp knives are used and the victim is allowed to bleed to death even if the pain and agony of the bare knives on the very sensitive organs doesn't of itself cause death." This, my students of science fiction, is the Queen explaining what happens to the unfortunates who fail, in 'the Fertile Man's Delight.'

Just how this book was able to remain on the stands, I don't know. But this sort of stuff will give s-f a bad name, and I solemnly promise to send the next one like it to someone who will be in a better position than I to do something to stop it.

I AM happy that the flood of British pocket-books is weakening.

General Chuntering

If you can get your hands on TIME, May 7th, take a looksee at the item on L. Ron Hubbard... if this is what DIANETICS can do for you, no thanks... Jerome Bixby gives up editorship of PLANET, and Malcolm Reiss takes over... Malcolm was editor of that 'zine back in 1939, when it was just a pup... rumour has it that Sam Merwin, Jr., is giving up editorship of the SS/TWS twins... just rumour, chums... wait until you get it definitely confirmed!... a recent rumour that F&SF was

folding was circulated . . . untrue, and damaging . . . remember the Bob Tucker rumour? . . . anyway, F&SF is not folding, and we hope that the r. about Sam is equally unfounded . . . LIFE, in an article on s-f generally, mentions ten fanzines, and your humble friend O.F. is among that ten . . . its May 21st, P.134 . . . send me a cutting, someone please . . . we regret that FANSCIENT, that excellent little 'zine, has folded, final issue being No. 13-14, and we wish Don Day, editor and publisher, all the best for his serious venture into art-work . . . we hope to see your oils on the covers yet, Don . . . in September, Dr. Paul W. Healy, sci-fic-fan, of South-western College, Kansas, takes up a post in Meteorites, at the U. of New Mexico . . . Paul says he is very pleased and hopes that this will give him an opportunity to appear in print . . . maybe even in the article column of ASF, Paul? . . . a belated report that John Newman has been, and still is, seriously ill has come to hand . . . and Cyril Banks also is in hospital . . . we're sure all fans who know them will join us in wishing them a speedy recovery . . . due to paper shortage SCIENCE FICTION FORT-NIGHTLY will now be MONTHLY, at least until September . . . and NEW WORLDS 11, promised for July, will be delayed until August for the same reason . . . a new Bok portfolio is now available, \$3 . . . it costs money to get the address printed . . . a collaboration between L. Sprague de Camp and Willy Ley, not yet completed, has been accepted by Rinehart . . . this work covers geographical legends, and will probably be titled something like LANDS BEYOND . . . just to be different! . . . Tony Boucher, co-editor of F&SF, has been elected president of the MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA . . . we are happy to report that Terry Jeeves and his wife now have a fine baby daughter, born May 17th, 1951 . . . latest film report received says 20th Century to make THE DAY EARTH STOOD STILL, with Hugh Marlow, Patricia Neal, Michael Rennie, and Sam Jaffe . . . this will be first venture using established "box-office" names, we are told . . . we don't know any box office names, so can't judge . . . where we are they still show Pearl Buck! . . . we learn Walt Gillings is still agenting for British writers . . . get in there, you hopefuls . . . and now we'll cut this short to make room for bigger things . . . adios . . . KFS.

"MASTERS OF FANTASY" (1)

"C. L. Moore"

by Arthur F. Hillman

In early 1945 it became clear to the ardent followers of Arkham House that they had a bitter pill to swallow—they had to reconcile themselves to the fact that the prospective anthology of C. L. Moore's stories was not to appear. This book, "SHAMBLEAU AND OTHERS," had been anticipated with relish by all true devotees of the macabre, for the quality of its contents would have been extremely high. Yet the blow fell; and though little is known of the differences between C. L. Moore and Derleth (which one assumes were mainly financial), the breach led to the abandonment of a collection of great stories, one already ranked as a highlight of imaginative fiction. Perhaps it is not too late to hope that an anthology of C. L. Moore's tales may yet take its rightful place among the shelves of fantasy-lovers.

It was in the issue of Weird Tales for November, 1933, that the first weird tale of C. L. Moore appeared—"SHAMBLEAU." With an ease of craftsmanship that seemed astonishing for a premier effort, the story

slowly weaved the threads of a strange saga, an account of the bizarre monstrosity that haunted Mars; a creature which had the semblance of a beautiful young girl, but behind whose facade lurked a horror too ghastly to be imagined. Into her toils came unsuspecting Northwest Smith, the dour adventurer of a dozen planetary experiences; and as the menace of the story grew in a steady culmination of power to a poignant climax, there was sensed behind the tale the deft touch of a master writer.

The story itself created an unprecedented furore; the case-hardened initiates of Farnsworth Wright's magazine had found a new titillation for their jaded palates. "Shambleau" was acclaimed as the finest weird story ever written, gripping the readers' attention in a spell of sheer wizardry and unearthly power. H. P. Lovecraft, dean of macabre writers, summed up the unanimous tribute in these words: "Shambleau is great stuff. It begins magnificently, on just the right note of terror, and with black intimations of the unknown. The subtle evil of the Entity, as suggested by the unexplained horror of the people, is extremely powerful—and the description of the Thing itself, when unmasked, is no let down. It has real atmosphere and tension—rare things among the pulp traditions of brisk, cheerful, staccato prose and lifeless stock characters and images."

Miss Moore was not long in further consolidating her position in the front-line of weird writers. In the following April she appeared in the pages of Weird Tales with "BLACK THIRST," a tale wherein her beautiful phraseology and expressiveness were again evident. Here was Northwest Smith once more, battling with an eldritch entity whose thirst for sheer, stark beauty knew no restrictions. Some of the passages of this story cannot be surpassed for wealth of imagery.

The next month, May 1934, saw the appearance of "SCARLET DREAM," in my opinion one of the weirdest tales I have ever read; chilling, in its nightmarish conceptions. Smith was led into the most bizarre adventure of his far-from-ordinary career—to a land where cannibal trees reached out with hungry arms, and vampire grass sucked the blood from the feet of unwary travellers. This tale is built up on a fabric as delicate as aery gossamer, but interwoven with a subtle horror more acute by reason of a light touch than any amount of heavy dramatic emphasis could have inserted.

After "DUST OF GODS" in the August, 1934 issue, Miss Moore temporarily shelved the delineation of her chief character, Northwest Smith. He had been built up with rare strength and dexterity; his swift reactions, his sturdy underlying power and rugged individuality, had transformed what might have been a cardboard marionette into a figure of well-nigh flesh and blood—a man whose emotions are our own. Now, as if to emphasise her adaptability, the authoress brought on the scene a new character in "THE BLACK GOD'S KISS" (Oct., '34). This was Jirel of Joiry, one of the few women we encounter in fantasy literature with what is commonly called 'guts.' None of the coy shrinking, the tremulous bashfulness of her sex is apparent in Jirel. She faces her bizarre dangers with courage, her enemies with audacity, and her love itself is a fiery tide that sweeps her forward with a tempestuous violence. Withal she is still woman—a creature of infinite moods and caprices, of indecisions and irresolutions, of sweet tenderness and calculating aggravation. She ranks with Weinbaum's Margaret of Urbs to make the two most realistically-penned feminine characters to flash in stormy and turbulent upheaval across the pages of fantasy.

"BLACK GOD'S KISS" showed that Miss Moore was maintaining a standard not in the least lower than any preceeding effort, a level of brilliance ranking with the fantasy giants of all time. To the strength and realism of her male competitors she was adding the intuitive insight and warmth that have always been marked attributes of the female sex. And

as her weird-story out-put grew in succeeding months, she faithfully adhered to this standard. Each tale as it came, seemed to create its own particular and valuable niche in the hall of fantasy: "The Black God's Shadow"; "Juhli"; "Jirel Meets Magic"; "The Cold, Grey God", etc. To enumerate the value of each one is unnecessary; one need merely say that the devotees of the bizarre who had clamoured for more, after "Shamblau," found no anti-climax, no weakening of story-effect to conform to the usual plot-formula.

In an analysis of the style of Catherine L. Moore, one recognises at once that it is uniquely her own. Free from the ponderous development of H.P. Lovecraft, the exotic extravaganza of Clark Ashton Smith, the impetuous action of Robert. E. Howard, it yet continues to arrest the reader by an unusual finesse of craftsmanship and delicacy. Perhaps it comes nearest of all to that of A. Merritt, but with an essential difference. Merritt's style is clear-cut and acutely-sharp, like the frosty brilliance of diamantes in a strong light; his words are knife-edged, sheer beauty outlined in stark and definite silhouette. The weird pictures he depicts are polished cameos, word-photographed with an immaculate precision. Miss Moore's words are equally telling, but arranged to give an effect much softer, even perhaps hypnotic.

It is as though we see her weird imagery through a soft veil of gauzy draperies, or shimmering through the turbid depths of a slowly stirring pool. There is an artistic diffusion, a dream-like remoteness in her situations that haunts the reader with a poignancy difficult to analyse. We slip into her outer stories as one merging imperceptibly into dreamland, and the slow spell of pure fantasy interweaves gradually around us. We are in dream, and feel the weirdness of dream, the horror and beauty of dream, the nightmare corners of dream that lurk and waver before our feverish vision. Miss Moore is probably the only writer who has consistently and effectively kept up this dream-aspect. H. P. Lovecraft has reached it in "Celephais," and "The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath"; Clark Ashton Smith has attained it in poetry; she alone has preserved it in the majority of her pulp magazine narratives.

The introduction of her stories in Weird Tales soon brought her into contact with that coterie of writers who were known as the "Lovecraft circle." Correspondence and a harmonious intermingling of characters and especially the ingredients of the Lovecraft mythology had already knit this band into a select fraternity; they welcomed the new writer as a vital exponent of their favourite brand of fiction. It was initiation into this particular circle that led to Miss Moore's collaboration on a later story with Henry Kuttner, a writer of distinction himself; and later still, on June 7th, 1940, she married him. A story in Argosy, 'EARTH'S LAST CITADEL,' reprinted in Fantastic Novels, was the product of their joint endeavours.

Primarily, this review is concerned only with the weird work of C. L. Moore, but there is still space to add that in the science-fiction field she has also distinguished herself. Her tales here are all distinctly above average, and well worth perusing. Notable is the depicting of Earth's declining days in 'THERE SHALL BE DARKNESS,' when the remnants of her once-glorious Empire fight desperately to ward off the encroaching collapse. 'JUDGEMENT NIGHT' is outstanding for its colourful description of the pleasure planet, Cyrille, where all things could be had—for a price. 'NO WOMAN BORN' gives the feelings of a woman bereft of all physical attributes, encased in a robot body; a tale that leaves the reader in a saddened and disturbed mood. It is very impressive.

The following is a list of her stories which may be of interest to enthusiasts of imaginative literature. Those which contain the characters Northwest Smith and Jirel are indicated by the symbols (NS) and (J) respectively. Certain of the tales have been reprinted in Avon Fantasy Reader, which are easier to obtain than the original Weird Tales. These

are denoted by AFR, and the number of the issue.

WEIRD

- SHAMBLEAU—W.T., '33 Nov. (NS) AFR7.
 BLACK THIRST—W.T., '34 Apl. (NS) AFR3.
 SCARLET DREAM—W.T., '34 May (NS) AFR5.
 DUST OF GODS—W.T., '34 Aug. (NS).
 JUHLI—W.T., '35 Mar. (NS).
 THE BLACK GOD'S KISS—W.T., '34 Oct. (J).
 THE BLACK GOD'S SHADOW—W.T., '34 Dec. (J).
 JIREL MEETS MAGIC—W.T., '35 Jul. (J).
 THE COLD GRAY GOD—W.T., '35 Oct. (NS).
 THE DARK LAND—W.T., '36 Jan. (J).
 YVALA—W.T., '36 Feb. (NS).
 LOST PARADISE—W.T., '36 Jul. (NS).
 THE TREE OF LIFE—W.T., '36 Oct. (NS).
 QUEST OF THE STARSTONE—W.T., '37 Nov. (NS & J) in collaboration with Henry Kuttner.
 HELLESGARDE—W.T., '39 Apl. (J).
 NYMPH OF DARKNESS—W.T., '39 Dec. (NS) in collaboration with Forest J. Ackerman.
 THE CHALLENGE FROM BEYOND—Fantasy Magazine, '35 Apl. In collaboration with Lovecraft, Howard, Merritt & F. B. Long.
 WEREWOMAN—Leaves, No. 2. 1938 (NS).
 DOORWAY INTO TIME—F.F.M., '43 Sept.

SCIENCE FICTION

- THE BRIGHT ILLUSION—Astounding Stories, '34 Oct.
 GREATER GLORIES—Astounding Stories, '35 Sept.
 TRYST IN TIME—Astounding Stories, '36 Dec.
 GREATER THAN GODS—Astounding Stories, '39 Jul.
 THERE SHALL BE DARKNESS—Astounding Stories, '42 Mar.
 JUDGEMENT NIGHT—Astounding Stories, '43 Aug.-Sept.
 NO WOMAN BORN—Astounding Stories, '44 Dec.
 EARTH'S LAST CITADEL—Argosy (1939?), Reprinted F.N., '50 Jul.

Non-Conventional Report

Dear Ken,

Many thanks for your letter, received this morning.

You asked me to write an account of the Convention (incidentally, my sister-in-law got mixed up between 'Convent' and 'Missionary', and

told a friend I had gone to a Mission in London). For many (not to say multifarious and multitudinous) reasons I am unable to do as you ask. Firstly, I hate—repeat, hate—writing of any kind, as I do it all the time in my work at an aircraft factory. Secondly, the little writing that I have attempted is so poor that in editing and re-editing my effort you would eventually curse the day you ever asked me.

Thirdly, well, there is no thirdly, so I'll go on to the next. Fourthly, my viewpoint is that of a poor country lad (poor but proud) and would cause derision both for G.L.C. and O.F. (Reverting to reason No. 2, look at all the — brackets that have worked their insidious way already into this letter.)

I may say, however, that I think I was the only fan who flew to the Convention. As Confucius says, "Better be airsick for two hours than seasick for twenty-four." Also I think I was the only one to get a room in the Royal Hotel—a purely fortuitous circumstance, by the way. However, for the first half-hour after the Viking lifted I was okay, but the steward served a light lunch, and having injudiciously partaken thereof, I very shortly began to fear that Short Bros. would be short one checker. I asked for a paper bag, and when the plane touched down I was able to give the lunch back to the steward. Coming back, I took two Kwell tablets and the old tum did no flip-flaps at all, at all.

This letter started out as a one-page effort, but like my figure, its spreading.

Going to the Hotel from the terminal I took a taxi—cost 5/-. That was on Tuesday the 8th. On my return I went by underground—cost 4d. That was on Monday, 14th.

Only saw two shows: Wednesday at the Berkeley ("Odette" and "Une si jolie petite plage") and the Folies Bergere at the Hippodrome, on Friday. Thursday, went to see the Changing of the Guard at the Palace; St. Paul's; Tower of London; The British Museum, etc. The last named could do with a cleaning, it is a grim, forbidding pile. One can almost imagine that it actually does have a copy of the fabulous NECRONOMICON. Come to think of it there are quite a number of similar piles in London, which reminds me I saw Harley Street. And nearly every book-shop I saw had several prominently displayed copies of "How I Cured My Duodenal Ulcer." In between times I wandered around High Holborn, Tottenham Court Road, Charing Cross, Fleet Street, the Strand, the Embankment, and so on. Somehow I got a great kick out of seeing places I've often read about. The greatest kick of all, however, was the morning I saw the Household Cavalry passing along the Strand in brilliant sunshine. I was fascinated.

Thursday night, about eight, I wandered down to the White Horse and was met by a terrific babble of noise. Definitely they are not the strong silent type, these London fans. Vince Clarke painlessly relieved me of 15/- and it was the following Sunday before I began to realise how they could do it all for so little. It was almost 10-30 before I dragged myself away. I went round again on Friday and got back to the Hotel at about eleven. You'll see I was not an all-night member! I gather there were plenty of those, tho.

Ted Carnell made a very good Chairman and thoroughly deserved the applause he received on Sunday night. Ted is the optimistic type. Forry Ackerman is a grand speaker—I could listen to him all day. William Temple's "feud" with Arthur C. Clarke was grand fun, though I think Temple won on points; his deadpan "Serial" was excellent.

The S.F. Soap Opera Company's "plays" were very good, and in particular I think most of us were surprised at the discovery of the Second Foundation. The auction went off well, and Ted Tubb got some good laughs from the folk who were being stung. Vince Clarke dished out

21/- for a first aSF, and a copy of 'WEAPON MAKERS' went for 95/- . . I shouldn't give Ted all the credit, other folk were 'auctioneering' also, but I can't remember just who! Talks by Mrs. Ackerman and A. C. Clarke went down very well, and I was specially interested in the subject of DIANETICS, which Mrs. Ackerman explained much better than the book! Ben Abas, the Dutch artist, many of whose water colours of fantastic animals, etc., decorated the walls, delivered a very good talk. A surprise item was the S-F AWARD, a Bonestell-type rocket, about a foot high on a stand, with a cigarette lighter in front, finished in chromium plate. One for non-fiction was awarded jointly to Bonestell and Ley for CONQUEST OF SPACE, and another to George Stewart for EARTH ABIDES. Forry Ackerman accepted the presentation on their behalf. This was arranged by an anonymous group, but whoever they were, it was a fine idea, and they deserve a pat on the back for it.

I enjoyed the films that were shown, but it was unfortunate that a misunderstanding 'twixt Vince and Ted prevented METROPOLIS from being included. As it happened there were plenty without it, and LOST WORLD was shown Saturday; and sundry assorted items, including rocket shots loaned by A. C. Clarke, and four amateur fantasy films, loaned by Forry, on Sunday. I don't know who the projectionist was, but he did a very creditable job, considering the difficulties under which he had to work.

I may have confused the auctions . . there were two. Forry ran one, and Ted the other. However, mags and books went for very reasonable prices. An autographed copy of SLAN fetched 75/-. I think it was £10. There were various side-shows . . SCIENCE FICTION FORTNIGHTLY was displayed by Editor Campbell, who was present all through the proceedings, Frank Cooper displayed, as did Ted Carnell.

All in all, I think everyone enjoyed themselves . . nearly 200 people attended, 8 countries were represented, and there were about twenty overseas visitors, including George Gallet, France; Sigvard Ostlund, Sweden; Ben Abas, Holland; Lee Jacobs, U.S.A.; Ken Paynter, Australia; Walt Willis and Party, and me, Ireland; and of course the Ackerman's. And some more, whose names I didn't get.

I enjoyed myself, anyway.

The weather was good all through my visit and I do not think London could have looked any better. And everyone seemed anxious to help a visitor: in fact the only mean thing in London was Greenwich Mean Time! It even has a 'Shaver's Place'! (The Belfast fans are quietly proud of their 'Bradbury Place').

The police over there are not so tall as the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and it seemed odd at first to see so many of them without revolvers.

The Royal Hotel is in W.C.1. They tell me that W.C. stands for "West Central." How quaint!

If you have had the patience to read thus far you can see why I cannot send a report as requested. It is a case of the spirit being willing, but the mind being weak. Maybe next year—if I can get to it—and maybe also Ken Slater will be there.

Anyhow, here's hoping,

as ever,

GEO. L. CHARTERS.

AT LAST . . .

BRITISH EDITIONS OF TOP U.S. BOOKS

THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS	- - John Wyndham	10/6
CRUISE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE	- - van Vogt	8/6
WHAT MAD UNIVERSE	- - - Fred Brown	8/6
MEN AGAINST THE STARS (anthology)	Ed.: Greenberg	8/6
THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION (anthology)	Edited: Bleiler and Dikty	8/6
THE BIG EYE	- - - - Max. Ehrlich	8/6
THE STAR KINGS	- - - - Hamilton	8/6
PRINCESS OF THE ATOMS	- - Ray Cummings	8/6

New British Books

TOMORROW SOMETIMES COMES	- - Rayer	9/6
THE SANDS OF MARS	- - Arthur C. Clarke	10/6
THE EXPLORATION OF SPACE	Arthur C. Clarke	12/6

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